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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

***NYC DEFENDERS STATEMENT ON LEGISLATIVE
ROLLBACK OF BAIL AND DISCOVERY REFORMS***

(NEW YORK, NY) – Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, The Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service, and New York County Defender Services issued the following statement in response to passage of budget legislation by the New York State Senate and Assembly including rollbacks of the historic bail and discovery reforms enacted last year:

“In the midst of a deadly and growing pandemic, the New York State legislature just passed a bail bill that will result in thousands more people being jailed before trial in facilities that are quickly becoming epicenters of COVID-19. The discovery provisions will also deny people facing criminal charges access to crucial and potentially exculpatory witness information. These are not small tweaks; they have bludgeoned reform just as it was taking root. Taken together, these actions mean more incarceration and more wrongful convictions at a time when lawmakers should be emptying jails and prisons to protect the health and safety of all New Yorkers. They will also exacerbate the existing racial disparities that define every level of the criminal legal system. Betraying the gains that New Yorkers fought many years to secure, lawmakers are sadly bowing to a cynical and baseless fear-mongering campaign. The State Senate has put the political seats of a few of their colleagues above the health and safety of all New Yorkers, and particularly Black and Latinx people and people in poverty targeted by the criminal legal system.

“These rollbacks ignore a core truth: Bail and discovery reform have had a profound and positive impact on tens of thousands of New Yorkers. Instead of sitting in jail with the cards stacked against

them, they have been able to remain with their families and communities and more effectively defend their rights and obtain a fairer outcome.

“We are profoundly grateful for the many legislators who fought alongside us and our allies over the last several months to protect bail and discovery reform as these highly successful new laws came under attack by opponents of reform. As attorneys representing people from underserved communities who will be most harmed by these changes, we will continue fighting to ensure justice for all New Yorkers.”

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